

Academic Policies and Procedures

Academic Honesty

Based upon its philosophy of education, St. Mary's University is strongly committed to academic excellence, truth, honesty, and personal integrity. The university expects all students to adhere to the following:

St. Mary's University Honor Code

"As a member of the St. Mary's University Community and Marianist Family, I promise not to participate in academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or other academic misconduct which deliberately infringes upon university policy. I will not tolerate these activities from my fellow classmates."

Academic dishonesty is clearly outlined in the Honor Code of Student Conduct. Students of St. Mary's University Community who willfully choose to violate the Honor Code understand that the Academic Dean will adjudicate infractions according to Article V: Judicial Charges and Hearings of the Honor Code Student Conduct. If deemed guilty, the consequences may include removal from St. Mary's University.

Sanctions for a student's academic dishonesty vary according to the seriousness of the offense and its nature. Teachers may require a student to redo a class/laboratory assignment; may record an F grade for the test or assignment in question; or, may record an F grade for the entire course. Any student appeal of a teacher-imposed sanction must be made in writing to the Academic Dean within fourteen (14) days of the student being notified of the offense by the teacher.

Teachers inform the Graduate Program Director in writing, with a copy to the Dean, concerning any sanctions imposed upon a student for academic dishonesty. More serious sanctions such as academic suspension or dismissal from the university or other appropriate actions are reserved to the Dean upon appeal. The Dean subsequently will convene a formal inquiry and then make a formal ruling in the matter.

Charges and Hearings for Academic Dishonesty

Hence, any form of academic dishonesty is considered a serious matter.

Any student who is guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary sanctions. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

1. Cheating: an act or attempted act of deception by which a student seeks to misrepresent information. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - a. Copying from another student's test paper.
 - b. Allowing another student to copy from your test paper.
 - c. Using textbooks, notes, and other unauthorized materials during a test.
 - d. Collaborating with others during a test or on a project where collaboration is not permitted.
 - e. Taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.
2. Plagiarism: the inclusion of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own work. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to:
 - a. Quoting another person's words, complete sentences or paragraphs, or whole works without acknowledgement of the source.
 - b. Using another person's ideas, opinions, or theories without acknowledgement of the source.
 - c. Borrowing facts, statistics, or other illustrating material without acknowledgement of the source.
 - d. Copying another person's essay test answer.
 - e. Copying or allowing another person to copy computer files that contain another student's assignments and submitting it either in part or in full as one's own work.
 - f. Working together on an assignment or sharing computer files and submitting that assignment as one's own individual work.
 - g. Refer to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers if further clarification of plagiarism is needed.
3. Fabrication: the intentional use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings. Examples of fabrication include but are not limited to:
 - a. Citations of information not taken from the source listed.
 - b. Listing sources in the bibliography that were not directly used in the exercise.
 - c. Submitting a paper, lab report, or research activity that is falsified, invented, or fictitious data or evidence.
 - d. Submitting work prepared totally or in part by another and representing it as your own.
4. Academic Misconduct: the intentional violation of university policies, tampering with grades, or taking part in obtaining and/or distributing any part of an unadministered test. Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to:
 - a. Stealing, buying, or obtaining all or part of an unadministered test (including answers).
 - b. Selling or giving away all or part of an unadministered test (including answers).
 - c. Bribing another person to obtain an unadministered test (including answers).
 - d. Entering a building or office for the purpose of changing a grade.

- e. Changing, altering, or supporting another student in the changing or altering of grade or other academic records.
- f. Forging signatures or changing information on class authorization forms.
- g. Continuing to work on a test or project after the time allowed has elapsed.
- 5. Violation of Federal Copyright Law, i.e., photocopying without authorization, etc.
- 6. Misuse of academic computing time and equipment.

A faculty member who finds a student guilty of academic dishonesty may impose the following sanctions:

- 1. Require a student to redo a class/laboratory assignment.
- 2. Record an F (failure) for a particular test, examination, or class/laboratory assignment that involves dishonesty.
- 3. Record an F (failure) for a final course grade.

Faculty members will inform, in writing, the director of their graduate program (Graduate Program Director), with a copy to the Dean, of any sanctions imposed upon graduate students for academic dishonesty.

In those instances where assignment or grade sanctions are considered insufficient, a faculty member may recommend to the Dean, in writing, that the student be suspended or permanently dismissed from the University.

Processes to be followed in incidents of a student's alleged academic dishonesty when referred to the Dean for action are outlined below.

- 1. Formal Inquiry by the Dean or his/her designated representative:
 - a. Secure from the faculty/staff member alleging the student dishonesty a written statement describing the nature and circumstances of the alleged offense.
 - b. Interview the respective faculty/staff member to clarify and to elaborate upon his/her written statement.
 - c. Secure from the accused student a written statement describing the incident.
 - d. Interview the accused student to clarify and to elaborate upon the student's written statement.
 - e. Interview any witness or other person identified as having or claiming firsthand knowledge of the incident.
 - f. Secure, examine, and retain any physical evidence related to the incident.
- 2. Determination of Validity of the Alleged Academic Dishonesty: In light of written statements, interviews, and available physical evidence, the dean decides the validity of the alleged violation of the academic dishonesty.
- 3. Informing the Student and the Accusing Party: No later than 21 days after receiving a referral concerning academic dishonesty, the dean completes the processes listed above, and informs in writing, the accusing faculty/staff member and the student of the judgment concerning the validity or non-validity of the alleged academic violation and of the sanction to be imposed.
- 4. Student's Rights to Appeal: If the student wishes to appeal the Dean's decision to the Academic Council, the student exercises this right to request an appeal by writing to the Provost within 14 days of the date the Dean's letter which informs the Student of the Dean's decision and stating the reason the student feels the decision should be changed.
- 5. A Hearing Before the Academic Council: The Academic Council is free to accept or reject the student's request for a personal hearing before the Academic Council. Within 14 days of receipt of the student's written request for an appeal, the Academic Council will inform the student, in writing, whether or not the appeal will be heard. Only those matters raised in the official appeal will be considered.
- 6. Final Decision and Judgment: Regardless of whether the student receives a personal hearing before the Academic Council, the decision of the Academic Council is final in all academic instances.

FERPA

The Office of the Registrar maintains education records for all currently enrolled and former students. Student education records are governed by the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, as amended.

Directory Information and Student Confidentiality

St. Mary's University will not disclose any personally identifiable information about students (except directory information listed below) without the written consent of the student. Directory information is that which is regularly made public such as student directory, athletic printed programs, requests made by potential employers, etc. St. Mary's University designates the following student information as directory information:

- 1. Name, address, telephone number, e-mail address
- 2. Major field
- 3. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- 4. Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- 5. Dates of attendance
- 6. Degrees, honors, and awards received
- 7. The most recent educational agency or institution attended

Each student has the right to restrict the release of this information by submitting the appropriate form to the Registrar's Office. This request will remain in effect while the student is enrolled or unless student rescinds the request. School officials with legitimate educational interests may have access to educational records, without the students' consent if the record is needed in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities. School officials are identified as a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position; a person or company with whom the University has contracted; a person serving on the Board of Trustees; or a student serving on an official committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is related to academic success and class participation contributes to the synergism of the educational process. Students are expected to attend all classes, including laboratories, practica, and attendance at events associated with the course or program.

The professor keeps the roll, may record a zero for any work missed due to an unexcused absence, and may drop a student for missing an equivalent of two weeks of classes. One absence in a laboratory will be the equivalent of two 50-minute absences or one 75-minute absence. "Two weeks" are computed as follows:

Fall and Spring Semesters:

1. Six unexcused absences in a 50-minute class period (e.g., MWF day class).
2. Four Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday classes (75 minutes)
3. Two evening classes which are 165 minutes per meeting

Summer Sessions:

1. Four day class meetings
2. Two evening class meetings

Absences for reasons other than University-sanctioned events (which must be approved by the Academic Dean or the Academic Vice President) will be determined to be "excused" or "not excused" by the professor.

An excessive number of absences, even if they are excused, can severely compromise the quality of the students' learning experience. Therefore, if the professor judges that the student has missed excessive material due to absences (excused, unexcused or a combination of the two), that professor may initiate action for withdrawal of the student from the class. The professor shall notify a student one class prior to initiating action for a student's withdrawal.

Grades assigned for withdrawals initiated by the professor or by the student are "W" (withdrawal) or "WF" (withdrawal with failure). The grades will be assigned according to the dates published by the Registrar's Office.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the professor before an absence, if possible, or, in the case of an emergency, as soon after the absence as possible. It is also the responsibility of the student to make up any work missed to the satisfaction of the professor on the basis of guidelines stated in that professor's course syllabus.

Appeals from decisions made concerning this attendance policy may be brought to the attention of the Program Director who, in turn, will file the appeal with the department chair. If the results of an appeal are not satisfactory at the department chair level, an appeal may be brought to the attention of the Academic Dean who will commence the appeal process.

Communication Skills

Graduate students are expected to demonstrate mastery of verbal and written communications. As communication skills are among the most important that students acquire, instructors are encouraged to evaluate communication as part of the students' course grade. If students demonstrate serious communication deficiencies through written assignments, oral reports, or examinations, the instructor may assign an Incomplete (IC) grade and refer the student to the Graduate Program Director. The Graduate Program Director will assign the student to the Learning Assistance Center for remedial work or enroll the student in one or more writing or verbal communication classes as appropriate. When the remedial assignment is completed, the student may reaccomplish or complete the assignment leading to the referral, enabling the instructor to submit a change of grade for the IP.

Information Technology Proficiency

Graduate students must be proficient in information technology. To be proficient, graduate students must know and be able to use the applications, software, and technologies appropriate for the program in which they are enrolled.

Requirements and proficiencies are determined by the Graduate Program Director. It is the responsibility of the graduate student to be proficient in information technology. Students should consult their Graduate Program Director to determine how to meet this requirement.

Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects (IRB)

A research proposal involving human subjects must be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) unless it has been exempt from review. All research conducted at St. Mary's University, including all theses and dissertations, that uses human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the IRB. The purpose of the review is to ensure that risks are minimized, benefits of research outweigh the risks, ethical principles are operative in all facets of the research, anonymity or confidentiality of the subjects is maintained to the extent possible, and subjects consent to participate in a suitably informed and voluntary manner. Procedures for requesting review and for more specific information concerning the review process can be found in the university's Research and Integrity Policy which is attached as Appendix A to these standards.

Concern for protecting the rights of human subjects of research in a systematic way goes back at least to the post-World War II Nuremburg trials and the Nuremburg Code that subsequently emerged. Any member of the University Community whose research may involve human subjects should understand not only the review requirements, but also the evolution of concern into law and regulation. Equally important is an understanding of the role in review deliberations of ethical judgment, community standards, and the code of ethics of the individual's professional field.

Transfer Credit

Courses with grades higher than B- may be considered for transfer.

Graduate course work accepted for credit must have been completed at an institution accredited, at the time the course work was completed, by a regional accrediting commission. Exceptions are allowed for transfer from foreign institutions, course work completed at an institution accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, or credit for military education. In the case of exceptions, graduate course work must be relevant to the degree, with appropriate content and level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least comparable to students in the St. Mary's University Graduate Studies; faculty for the course work must meet the criteria for teaching at the graduate level. In assessing and documenting comparable learning and qualified faculty, St. Mary's uses recognized guides such as those published by the American Council on Education, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs.

Students must complete a minimum of 24 hours (for a 36-hour degree program) or a minimum of 21 semester hours (for a 30-hour degree program) in residence at St. Mary's. For all degree plans, exclusive of prerequisites, students must earn at least two-thirds of the credit hours required in the degree granting program at St. Mary's University.

Students enrolled in classes at recognized satellite locations, in University administered on-line classes and programs, and in classes taught at other Catholic Universities having an inter institutional exchange agreement (Oblate Theological College, University of the Incarnate Word, and Our Lady of the Lake University) with St. Mary's are considered in residence.

Credit From Previous Graduate Degree

Students pursuing a Master's degree in a field related to their other graduate degree may request recognition of up to 12 semester hours from their other graduate degree.

Credit From United Colleges of San Antonio

St. Mary's University, University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University, and Oblate School of Theology maintain a cooperative enterprise for undergraduate and graduate learning. The consortium is a confederation composed of the independent colleges of liberal arts and sciences, specialized schools for professional training, libraries, and research endeavors, cooperating with each other. Twelve credits may be taken with the approval of the Graduate Program Director and Dean under the Inter-Institutional Agreement.

Any exceptions to the above stated policy can only be approved by the Dean on the recommendation of the Program Director.

Undergraduate Enrollment

An undergraduate who needs not more than 12 hours in one semester to complete all of the requirements for a bachelor's degree may be allowed to register for graduate work and credit provided all undergraduate work will have been completed during that semester and the total in that semester does not exceed 15 semester hours.

Study Days & Final Exam Schedule

At the end of each Fall and Spring semester, the two days prior to the beginning of the Final Exam Schedule are designated as Study Days. Classes do not meet during Study Days. All major reports and assignments should be scheduled to be completed before Study Days.

Study Days are not to be used as dates on which papers are to be turned in, examinations are to be given, quizzes are to be scheduled, mandatory review sessions are to be held, or for any other class-related activities, other than office hours. Voluntary review sessions at which no new material is presented may be conducted by faculty on these days.

The official schedule of final examinations is published by the Office of the Registrar. Final examinations given during the Final Exam Schedule must be given on the dates and at the times when they are scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, exams will take place in the same classroom where the class has been scheduled over the semester.

Departure from the Final Exam Schedule can be authorized only by the Dean of the respective school.